

Resolution on Affordable Housing and Rent Control

Whereas, the Article 25 of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes housing as a human right; and

Whereas, housing unaffordability in Seattle has become a crisis, with apartment rents in the city rising tremendously in recent years, including a nearly 11% increase between 2010-13, the highest rent increases of any major U.S. city in 2012 and 2013; and

Whereas, Seattle is now among the nation's ten most expensive cities to live in, and more than 47% of Seattle rental households now considered rent-burdened, paying more than 30% of their incomes for rent and utilities; and

Whereas, the Seattle Housing Authority, which serves over 16,000 low-income households, reported having over 9,400 households on its waiting lists after opening their waiting list in 2013 while the 2015 One Night Count found 3,772 unsheltered people in King County, a 21% increase since 2014; and

Whereas, in 2014, investors spent an unprecedented \$3.8 billion buying apartment buildings in the Greater Seattle Area, raising rents, and depleting the affordable units in the private sector; and

Whereas, people of color comprise about one-third of Seattle's population, and in 2009, poverty rates in Seattle were 26 percent for African-Americans, 18 percent for Latinos, 16 percent for Asians, and 13 percent for multi-racial persons, compared with just 9 percent for Whites; and

Whereas, the City's 2008 analysis of impediments to fair housing in Seattle identifies these conditions as impediments to fair housing in Seattle, stating: "An inadequate supply of affordable housing in Seattle exacerbates fair housing challenges by impeding housing choice. Seattle's robust private housing market continues to fuel migration of low-income and minority residents toward areas outside of the city as rents and home prices escalate;" and

Whereas, many other U.S. cities have preserved affordability and mitigated the fair housing impacts of rent increases through rent stabilization approaches; and

Whereas, RCW 35.21.830 states that "No city or town of any class may enact, maintain, or enforce ordinances or other provisions which regulate the amount of rent to be charged for single-family or multiple-unit residential rental structures or sites other than properties in public ownership, under public management, or properties providing low-income rental housing under joint public-private agreements for the financing or provision of such low-income rental housing."

Now, therefore, be it resolved that 43rd District Democrats call for the Seattle City Council and Mayor make it the official policy of the City of Seattle that the undemocratic prohibition on rent control by the State of Washington be overturned, and that the City should actively lobby the State Legislature to end this ban.

Be it further resolved that this resolution should be shared with the Chairs of the other Legislative District organizations in King County, and the King County Democratic Central Committee, with a request that they also pass it.

Approved by the 43rd District Democrats at the September 15th, 2015 General Membership meeting.